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# Clinton announces \$10m health aid

Hyderabad, March 24

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**U**S President Bill Clinton on Friday announced an aid package of \$10 million to fight infectious diseases and for penetration of information technology into rural areas in India.

Clinton, who was here for over five hours, visited the Mahavir Hospital where he administered the last dose of medicine to declare three patients cured from tuberculosis, and declared an aid of \$5 million dollars to fight the twin diseases of AIDS and TB.

He also announced a \$5 million dollar aid for the promotion of information technology in rural areas while addressing software entrepreneurs at the Hi-Tec city where he described India as having the potential to become world's largest economy by using Internet power in education.

Clinton and his daughter Chelsea, who arrived here from Jaipur in the morning, were given a warm welcome at the airport by Governor Dr S Rangarajan, chief minister N Chandra Babu Naidu and minister of state for railways Bangaru Laxman.

Describing US President's visit to the city as a recognition to the IT development programmes being pursued by Andhra Pradesh government, the chief minister said Clinton was impressed with the women welfare programme - development of women and children in rural areas (DWACRA), and the strides made by the state in information technology.



**US President Bill Clinton and his daughter Chelsea on their arrival at the Begumpet airport in Hyderabad on Friday**

The Clintons later left for Mumbai and were seen off at the Begumpet airport by the governor and the chief minister, who presented a memento and a shawl to the president and a

pearl necklace to the Chelsea. Meanwhile, nine left parties, led by CPI and CPM held a protest demonstration opposing the visit of Clinton describing it as "imperialist in nature." (PTI)

# For doctors at Mahavir, it was a red-letter day

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US President Bill Clinton paid a visit to the Mahavir Hospital and Research Centre here on the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day on Friday to cheer up the patients, making it also a memorable and unique event for the management, doctors and the staff.

"We did not imagine that the most powerful man on the earth would visit our centre and his visit was indeed a memorable and unique event," Shanthi Lal Dagher, managing trustee of the hospital, run by a private trust, said here.

"It was all the more significant as the US president had chosen this venue to deliver the message to the world," he added.

A pioneer in starting dialysis unit in the state in the private sector, Mahavir Hospital was only one of the two places shortlisted for Clinton's visit here.

The president spoke to three TB patients at the hospital here, who underwent a six-month therapy under TB eradication programme funded by World Bank and World Health Organisation (WHO), and administered final dose to them. A nine-month old girl child affected with polio was also given tablet by the US president on the occasion.

The free TB clinic was being run here at the Mahavir Hospital under the public-private mix dots project with fund assistance from World Health Organisation since 1995.

The project, aimed at helping half-a-million people in Hyderabad, signified the linking of the public and private sectors and won the applause of the US president too this morning.

The Mahavir Hospital began the project in 1995 with support from the British government and WHO and working closely with national, state and local TB authorities by covering a population of 100,000. After having success with this population, the coverage was increased to 500,000.



**US President Bill Clinton administers an oral polio vaccine to nine-month-old Sandhya Balakrishna during his visit to Mahavir hospital on Friday. In a speech to employees of the hospital, Clinton said the diseases still plaguing India brought "human tragedies, economic calamities". Holding the baby is her mother Pushpalatha Balakrishna and at left is Dr. Bitagunta Sailaja**

Under the project, patients with cough are referred to Mahavir Hospital for evaluation. If they are found to have TB, they begin treatment at the hospital here, which also serves as a link with more than 350 doctors who practice in the

area, according to Dr KJS Murthy, in-charge of free TB clinic.

According to him, diagnosis and treatment are done as recommended by the Union government, consistent with US and international rec-

ommendations.

The innovative programme has treated more than 1000 TB patients and more than eight out of 10 patients successfully—a success rate equal to that of US, Dr Murthy claimed. (PTI)



**WALKING HAPPY:** US President Bill Clinton holds the hand of nine-month-old Sandhya Balakrishna after he administered an oral polio vaccine to the baby during his visit to Mahavir Hospital in Hyderabad on Friday. In a speech to employees of the hospital, Mr Clinton said the diseases still plaguing India brought "human tragedies, economic calamities." (Reuters)

## Clinton grants \$4 million to fight AIDS

BY STEVE HOLLAND

**Hyderabad, March 24:** The US President Bill Clinton threw his weight behind India's struggle with killer diseases on Friday, administering polio drops to an infant and calling for a drive against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

The President watched as three patients received tuberculosis treatment at a non-profit trust hospital in Hyderabad, the penultimate stop on his four-day visit to India.

Then he dropped polio vaccine into the mouth of eight-month-old Sandya, who scowled as she lay in the arms of her mother. "Oooh. She's beautiful," he said as he held the baby's tiny hand.

Although India had about 70 per cent of the world's 5,000 reported polio cases in 1999, it has made great strides in bringing down the incidence of the crippling virus through mass inoculation drives. In 1988 there were 350,000 cases of polio reported from 125 countries.

In a speech to employees of the Mahavir hospital, Mr Clinton said the diseases still plaguing India brought "human tragedies, economic calamities."

Noting that India had virtually eradicated polio, he said it was now time to make a similar effort against the scourges of AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

"We want to do for AIDS, for malaria, for TB what you have done for polio," he said. "We must strengthen prevention, speed research, develop vaccines and ultimately eliminate these modern plagues from the face of the earth. It can be done, you have proved it with polio, if governments, foundations and private sector work together."

He noted that more people had AIDS in India than in any other single country in the world.

The Indian government's most recent estimate of the number of people with HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS, is 3.5 million, but non-government organisations say the number could

be closer to five million as there are still many cases which have not been reported.

In some parts of southern India the spread of HIV has reached "generalised epidemic" proportions, where more than one per cent of women attending antenatal clinics are HIV positive. "We have to face up to our responsibility for preventing this disease because there is not yet a cure," Mr Clinton said.

"With AIDS in particular it also takes leadership. I want to commend Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for his efforts to focus India's attention on the urgency of this challenge."

He announced that the United States would contribute a further \$4 million this year to programmes to prevent AIDS and care for its victims in India. The Mahavir Hospital coordinates Directly Observed Therapy Shortcourse, the best-known strategy for treating tuberculosis — ensuring patients swallow a prescribed cocktail of drugs — for half a million people in Hyderabad. (Reuters)

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# Clinton grants \$ 5 million to fight TB, AIDS

By S. Nagesh Kumar

**HYDERABAD, MARCH 24.** The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, called for a wider partnership between India and the United States to combat malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS on the lines of their cooperation during the green revolution in the Sixties which helped India attain self-sufficiency.

He set the ball rolling for this cooperation on the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day today by announcing a \$ 5 million grant to India to fund projects for AIDS control (\$ 4 million) and TB research (\$ 1 million).

Mr. Clinton was speaking at Mahavir Hospital, a small institution run by a trust, which has been in the forefront of implementing the Direct Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS), a method of administering drugs to TB patients under supervision of health workers, which has proved to be highly successful in developing countries.

In Mr. Clinton's presence, three TB patients — Chaitanya (12), Niteshwari (18) and Mohammed Mahaboob (35) — took the last dose of isonex rifampicin to symbolise their complete cure from the debilitating disease. Along with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, and the Health Minister, Dr. S. Aruna, he also supervised the administration of oral polio vaccine to a nine-month-old girl, Sandhya.

The U.S. Government chose TB as the focus of Mr. Clinton's healthcare initiative as India accounts for 30 per cent of tuberculosis cases in the world, as against 15 per cent in China. It is also the single leading infectious killer. Each year, TB kills 4.21 lakh people, which is more than the toll taken by HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, malaria, leprosy and tropical diseases. Above all, TB is the strongest risk factor for HIV among adults.

The President said he had sought the support of the U.S. Congress for a \$ 1 billion programme for research on TB, AIDS and malaria, so that vaccine could be made available at affordable rates to patients in developing countries. Pointing towards Mr. Gary Ackerman and five other Congressmen accompanying him, he hoped he would have their cooperation.

Mr. Clinton said he was here to celebrate India's success story in its war against polio and meeting new challenges posed by TB and AIDS. Referring to Dr. Aruna's statement that Andhra Pradesh was on the verge of eradicating polio, he said the incidence of polio had come down from 27,000 in 1987 to 1,000 now, with no new cases being reported.

Mr. Clinton said though the TB bacteria was discovered 118 years ago, the disease remained a major killer with one person dying every minute in India. Malaria too was on the rise in South East Asia and Africa while AIDS had turned into a global problem from which no nation was immune. There was need for a concerted battle by the Government and the private sector against these 'modern plagues' on the lines of India's war to eradicate polio.

Referring to the threat posed by AIDS to the U.S., and now to India, he said it was much easier to talk about it than see another child die. "We must face the challenge of preventing this disease for which there is no cure." He complimented the Bill Gates Foundation for its new contribution to fight infectious diseases and said this had no parallel.

The U.S. President also paid a tribute to the talent and genius of Indian scientists for their pioneering work in TB treatment, stating that it was practiced even in the U.S. and praised Indian healthcare officials for their dedication.

His daughter, Chelsea, the U.S. Commerce Secretary, Mr. William Daley, the Ambassador, Mr. Richard Celeste, the Indian envoy, Mr. Naresh Chandra, eminent medical specialists, health officials and representatives of voluntary agencies were among those present.